

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SCCT-02 SAB-01

SAM-01 SAJ-01 OMB-01 AID-20 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SR-02 ORM-03 ACDA-19 SSO-00 NSCE-00 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8743

DIA PRIORITY

USINT DAMASCUS

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7543

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

LONDON FOR LAMBRAKIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR PINS PMIL LE IS SY XF

SUBJ: NEW LEBANESE, PALESTINIAN POSITION SUPPORTED BY SYRIA

VIS-A-VIS TERRORISM?

REF: BEIRUT 7430

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SUMMARY: IN JUNE 30 MEETING WITH PM SOLH, THREE REPS (ALL FROM FATAH) HAVE MODERATED POSE WHICH 'ARAFAT APPEARED ASSUME IN CLOSING DAYS OF PAST WEEK AND STRESSED, IN 'ARAFAT'S (WHO IN DAMASCUS) NAME, "FREEZING" OF FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS FROM LEBANON AND DESIRABILITY CLOSER COORDINATION WITH GOL AUTHORITIES. WITH ONE EYE ON UPCOMING ARAB DEFENSE COUNCIL (ADC) SESSIONS AND OTHER EYE ON RECENT EVIDENCE OF SERIOUS STRIFE AMONG FEDAYEEN GROUPS, 'ARAFAT AND CO MAY BE ACTING, IN PART AT LEAST, ON ADVICE OF SAG, LENDING CREDENCE TO VIEW SYRIA MIGHT PLAY ROLE SUPPORTIVE OF GOL AND SO-CALLED "MODERATE" PALESTINIAN EEENTS. HOWEVER, NEITHER PLO/FATAH NOR SARG HAS ABILITY, SHORT OF APPLICATION OF FORCE, TO COMPLE FEDAYEEN RADICALS TO ACT IN MORE RESPONSIBLE FASHION. THUS, WHILE RECENT DEVELOPMENT MAY GO A BIT FARTHER TOWARD ISOLATING "CRAZIES" IN FEDAYEEN RANKS, IT WILL NOT SERVE TO CURB THEIR TROUBLE-MAKING POTENTIAL UNLESS SARG AND OTHERS WILLING USE FORCE CURB EXTREMISTS. END SUMMARY.

1. TACTICAL POSTURE STRUCK BY PLO LEADERSHIP WAS SHARPLY ALTERED OVER WEEKEND FROM DEFIANT ATTITUDE DISPLAYED IN PREVIOUS WEEKS INTO ONE OF PUBLIC PRUDENCE AND CONCILIATION. NEED TO PROTECT FLANKS AFTER BLOODY INTER-FEDAYEEN CLASHES AT BEIRUT REFUGEE CAMPS (BEIRUT 7454) AND TO ASSURE FUTURE ROLE BY RECEIVING FAVORABLE HEARING AT ARAB DEFENSE COUNCIL (ADC) MEETING OPENING JUNE 3 APPARENTLY LED PLO - OR AT LEAST 'ARAFAT AND CO - TO ANNOUNCE RENEWED DECISION TO FOREGO MILITARY OPERATIONS FROM LEBANON AND TO ENGAGE IN CLOSE COORDINATION WITH LEBANESE AUTHORITIES.

2. THREE OF 'ARAFAT'S TOP FATAH AIDES--ABU IYAD (SALAH KHALAF), ABU LATF (FAROUQ QADDOUMI) AND ABU ZA'IM ('ATALLAH 'ATALLAH)--CALLED ON PRIMIN SOLH JUNE 30 TO INFORM GOL OF PLO DECISION TO "FREEZE" ALL OPERATIONS FROM LEBANON AND SUSPEND INFILTRATION OF TERRORISTS FROM SOUTH LEBANON "IN ORDER TO DENY ISRAEL ANY PRETEXT FOR FURTHER ATTACKS ON LEBANON OR OCCUPATION OF LEBANESE TERRITORY." TRIO ASSERTED, HOWEVER, THAT

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FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS WITHIN ISRAEL WOULD CONTINUE AND EVEN BE ESCALATED. 'ARAFAT'S EMISSARIES ALSO PROPOSED RENEWED COORDINATION WITH GOL, CALLING FOR DEVELOPING COMMON PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE POSITION AT ADC MEETING AND FOR JOINT EFFORTS TO RESTORE DISCIPLINE AND CALM IN CAMPS. LEADING BEIRUT PAPERS BANNERED NEWS, HERALDING BEGINNING OF "NEW ERA IN LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS."

3. SUDDEN PALESTINIAN ACTION FOLLOWS TALKS IN DAMASCUS BY BOTH PRIMIN SOLH AND 'ARAFAT AND MAY WELL HAVE RESULTED IN PART FROM SYRIAN PRESSURES (SEE BEIRUT 7430). IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT SOLH, IN HIS JUNE 29 DISCUSSIONS WITH ASSAD AND OTHER SYRIAN OFFICIALS, SOUGHT SARG'S INTERCESSION WITH PALESTINIANS IN PERSUADING LATTER TO HALT CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITIES. FACT THAT 'ARAFAT SPENT WEEKEND IN DAMASCUS LENDS ADDED CREDENCE TO POSSIBLE SYRIAN ROLE.

4. DETERIORATING PALESTINIAN IMAGE IN LEBANON, HOWEVER WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTRIBUTING FACTOR. EXODUS OF REFUGEES FROM CAMPS IN SOUTH LEBANON--ERODING PLO CONTROL OVER ITS "CONSTITUENTS"--PLUS INTER-FEDAYEEN BLOODLETTING OF JUNE 28 MADE IT IMPERATIVE FOR 'ARAFAT TO SHIFT TO CONCILIATORY POSITION WITH LEBANESE IN ATTEMPT TO DEMONSTRATE HIS "AUTHORITY". EVEN SO, Wafa DECLARATION ON JUNE 30 CONTINUED TO GLOSS OVER INTERNAL FEDAYEEN DIFFERENCES, ACCUSING "ANTI-PALESTINIAN PLOTTERS" OF HAVING INCITED JUNE 28 SHOOT-UP.

5. IN MEANTIME, ARMY G-2 REPORTS LESS ISRAELI SHELLING TOOK PLACE DURING WEEKEND THAN DURING PREVIOUS DAYS-- 56 RDS ON 29 JUNE AND 28 RDS ON 30 JUNE SCATTERED IN ARQUB, SOUTHERN MARJ'UYUN DIST (WADI SALUQI/MAYS AL JABAL), AND CENTRAL BINT JUBAYL DISTRICT (BAYT YAHUN SHAQRA, BRA'SHIT). NO CASUALTIES REPORTED.

6. COMMENT: (A) THIS NOT, OF COURSE, FIRST TIME PLO LEADERSHIP HAS ASSURED GOL OF THEIR CONCERN FOR LEBANON'S "SAFETY", OF THEIR DECISION TO "FREEZE" OPERATIONS ORIGINATING FROM LEBANESE TERRITORY, AND OF THEIR DESIRE FOR GREATER PALESTINIAN/LEBANESE COORDINATION. (WE CONFIDENTIAL

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RECALL SIMILAR ASSURANCES MADE BY 'ARAFAT TO PRES FRANGIE LESS THAN 24 HOURS BEFORE NAHARIYA RAID ON JUNE 24. IN PAST, SUCH ASSURANCES--IN VIEW OF LACK OF COHESION AND DISCIPLINE IN FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT--HAVE HAD LITTLE VALUE, BEING IGNORED BY RADICAL ELEMENTS. AT PRESENT TIME, THEY PROBABLY ARE WORTH EVEN LESS, GIVEN FATAH'S TRANSPARENT ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY FUTURE OPERATIONS AS MOUNTED ENTIRELY WITHIN "OCCUPIED TERRITORIES." AS FOR PREDICTABLE PLO EFFORT TO BLAME JUNE 28 PFLP-PFLP/GC CLASHES ON "ANTI-PALESTINIAN PLOTTERS", WE CAN ONLY WONDER WHICH OF THESE TWO GROUPS Wafa CONSIDERS "ANTI-PALESTINIAN". (B) WE WOULD LIKE TO THINK (AS SUGGESTED PARA 6 AND 7 DAMASCUS 1284) THAT SYRIA IS IN FACT PREPARED PLAY MODERATING ROLE IN LEBANESE/PALESTINIAN RELATIONS AND EXERT ITS INFLUENCE TOWARD

HELPING RESTRAIN FEDAYEEN. SIMULTANEOUS PRESENCE OF
PRIMIN SOLH AND 'ARAFAT IN DAMASCUS OVER PAST WEEKEND
PROVIDES PROVOCATIVE BACKDROP FOR INTERPRETING NATURE
AND TIMING OF FATAH'S LATEST ASSURANCES TO GOL. COULD
BE THAT SARG HAS AT MINIMUM TOLD 'ARAFAT THAT IT DOES
NOT WISH BE DRAGGED INTO NEW CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL
OVER LEBANON AND THAT BEST MEANS OF AVOIDING THIS WOULD
BE TO REMOVE, TO EXTENT POSSIBLE, ANY "JUSTIFICATION"
ISRAEL MIGHT HAVE FOR THREATENING LEBANON. JUST HOW
FAR SARG WOULD BE PREPARED TO GO ADOPTING MODERATE
STANCE SUPPORTIVE OF LEBANON MAY BECOME CLEARER DURING
ARAB DEFENSE COUNCIL MEETINGS IN CAIRO LATER THIS WEEK.
(WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY LIGHT DAMASCUS CAN SHED ON
THIS QUESTION). SHOULD BE REMEMBERED, HOWEVER, THAT
SARG--WHATEVER ITS GOOD INTENTIONS MAY BE--HAS LITTLE
LEVERAGE OVER RADICAL, DIE-HARD FEDAYEEN ELEMENTS WHO
ALREADY APPEAR BEYOND PLO/FATAH LEADERSHIP'S ABILITY
TO CONTROL.
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